



Testimony submitted December 5, 2009 for

Speaker Donovan's Task Force on Children in the Recession

Kevin Booker, Father and East Hartford Resident

Submitted by the Community Renewal Team, Inc.

Good morning, my name is Kevin Booker and I live in East Hartford. This is my daughter, Katrina. I am happy to have this chance to speak to you about the recession.

As you can tell I am a very proud dad. A single dad with shared custody of my daughter.

For dads like me, who are trying to pay child support, the bad economy really hits hard. I am juggling three different part-time jobs, but the hours have been cut at all of them. It's been very bleak.

I've applied for about 80 jobs in the last six months, steady jobs that had benefits. But I don't even get called for an interview.

The courts set up your child support, and they don't really care about your job situation. In my case, it's \$75 per week. If I fall behind on the child support, then I might wind up in prison. But I'm not going to let that happen!

My daughter was born while I was serving nine months in prison. For months after my release, I wasn't even allowed to meet my baby.

It took a lot of work, a lot of court appearances. The CRT Fatherhood Initiative helped me out. First I got supervised visitation. Then longer unsupervised visits. And now on Thursday nights and every-other weekend, I've got Katrina with me.

I've spent a lot of time building a relationship with my little girl. It's not something I'm willing to let go! She's starting to really bond with me.

I am willing to do any kind of work. I'd like to go back to working with troubled people, those who are homeless or mentally challenged. That's what I've done before. But right now I'm cleaning a bank, I'm scrubbing public toilets. I can do anything!

The bad economy is hurting everyone, but especially single dads. The court insists that you get a real job. They want you to have a fulltime job that's on paper, with benefits.

I think we need more training programs that can help inner city people get ready for jobs – jobs that are really out here. Some of my friends have gone through training programs. And maybe there are 1,000 people who are getting the training, but there are only 100 jobs.

Some of these training programs are expensive, and people have to borrow a few thousand dollars to pay for it. But if you have had a bank loan before, and you didn't pay off that loan, they won't give you another loan.

The other thing is that family courts have to be more understanding about the times we're in. This is not the time to be breaking up families over late payments. This is the time to help people build up their family's strength, to try to get through this.

Thank you.

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